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SPECIAL COMMITTEE FOR THE PREPARATION OF PLANS FOR THE CELEBRATION OF THE FIFTEENTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

PLANS FOR THE CELEBRATION OF THE FIFTEENTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

(Note by the Secretary-General)

The Secretary-General has received the following communications, relating to plans for the celebration of the fifteenth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, from non-governmental organizations having consultative status with the Economic and Social Council, and has the honour to transmit them to the Committee.

INTERNATIONAL CONFEDERATION OF FREE TRADE UNIONS

"... I should like to indicate to you briefly the tentative plans which the ICFTU intends to carry out or to submit to its affiliated organisations, as well as to the international trade secretariats associated with the ICFTU.

"We plan to draw the attention of all affiliated organisations to the importance of a dignified observation of the fifteenth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and to suggest that, where national centres for the preparation of the anniversary are established, they should participate in their work.

"We also plan to prepare draft articles on the importance of the Declaration which we will ask you affiliated organisations and the international trade secretariats to use for publicity of their own.

"In addition, we plan to make arrangements for celebrating the anniversary in our own labour colleges and in seminars organised by the ICFTU, which may be held at the time of the anniversary, and we will invite our regional organisations, our affiliated organisations, and the international trade secretariats to make similar arrangements for seminars and courses which they may hold at that time."

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CONSULTATIVE COUNCIL OF JEWISH ORGANIZATIONS

The following proposals are submitted for consideration:

"1. Popular pamphlet on the Human Rights Commission and the Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities

"What the Commission does - in fact its very existence - is virtually unknown except in rarefied circles. The UN has published the Sub-Commission's studies, but there is no 'translation' for popular consumption to acquaint the public with the human substance of these studies, as well as other contributions of the Sub-Commission. The same applies to the projects of the Commission. While 'UN Work for Human Rights' is a step in the right direction and contains much useful information, it is still fairly pedantic and theoretical, does not tell how the Commission and Sub-Commission actually work, how and where the studies are made, what they show in human terms - in short, what the Commission is doing for Joe Doakes.

"2. Guide to community check-ups on rights studied by the Commission

"Using the studies already made, a community-action guide or perhaps a questionnaire could be developed to show how the status of those specific rights could be examined by interested communities in various parts of the world with a view to comparing their own local practices with the standards implicit in the studies and bringing local practices up to par - of course bearing in mind that various countries may differ in their patterns of life, within the framework of the Declaration's standards.

"3. Film on human rights

"There is persistent need for a vivid, timely motion picture dramatising the Universal Declaration, which could be used on TV as well as in theatres and other community settings. The UN film produced many years ago is something of a museum piece.

"4. Worldwide 'Festival of Human Rights'

"There is a wonderful reservoir of popular drama and literature - novels, plays, motion pictures, magazine stories, TV shows, song and dance - relating to human rights themes. In every country where drama and music festivals are

customarily held at various times throughout the year, UNESCO might invite the local powers-that-be to perform, project or display a selection of the most notable indigenous works dealing with some facet of human rights and upholding the dignity of man.

"Press, radio and TV in every country could be invited to join in this festival during some designated period, presenting the type of material best suited to the particular medium.

"5. Art for Human Rights

"Similarly, UNESCO might invite museums throughout the world to run human-rights shows, drawing from their own collections the finest works appropriate to the Universal Declaration.

"A plan along these lines is presently afoot in the U.S.A.; the major 40 or 50 museums throughout the country are being asked to present their own shows on human rights during the period from November 15 to December 15.

"6. Worldwide Scoreboard

"Each Member State might be invited to get out its own version of 'The People Take the Lead'[1] showing factually its 'plus' scores. Inasmuch as the leader of one of the world's major powers has challenged others to engage in 'competitive coexistence' in the economic sphere, let us extend this competition to the field of human rights.

"By NGO's

"1. Guidebooks for community action

"Just as NGO's in the United States have joined in sponsoring a community-action guidebook for human-rights checkups or 'audits' in American communities (entitled The Great Question and due off the press March 1), so NGO's in other countries could do likewise, stressing those issues and human-rights needs which especially require citizen scrutiny and action in their countries.[2]

1/ Samples of this publication were transmitted with the memorandum.

2/ A copy of the publication and a list of sponsoring organizations was attached to the memorandum.

"2. 'Let's Be Human'

"NGO's could be asked to activate their members in a 'Let's Be Human' drive to examine the problems of human rights and human relations which relate to their particular interests and recommend the best means of resolving them. This drive might climax in over-all NGO conferences in each of those countries where it is possible for citizen experiences and views to be freely exchanged."

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INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF FREE JOURNALISTS

"... The Executive Committee of the International Federation of Free Journalists has discussed the anniversary and respectfully submits the following suggestions:

"1. The anniversary year which begins next December should be declared 'United Nations Year of Human Rights'. The Secretary-General could open it with a special pronouncement, and the General Assembly could vote a special resolution. The real meaning of the Year, however, would be the public airing and analysis of the state of human rights in the world through international organizations, conferences, meetings and the like. The Society of Friends of the United Nations and the non-governmental organizations may be helpful in these matters.

"2. The publication under U.N. sponsorship of a collection of historic documents in the history of Man's struggle for universal rights - Britain's Magna Carta, the Polish Neminem Captivabimus, the French Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen, the American Declaration of Independence and Virginia Declaration of Rights, the European Declaration of Human Rights and the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights. Historic speeches could also be included. Joint publication of such documents in several languages would place the present efforts of the United Nations in their philosophical and historical perspective.

"3. As the problem of self-determination became the most important trend in the history of the United Nations Organization in the present decade a broad-ranging study of the state of self-determination of nations should be initiated by the U.N. Perhaps some major national or international foundations could be persuaded to cover the cost of study and publication.

"4. An effort should be made by the United Nations and its agencies to see that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is made known in those parts of the world where the text of this document is not known at all. There are vast areas of the world in which the principles of the Declaration are totally unknown because the Declaration is not translated into the local languages.

"5. The basic problem, however, would be to achieve the co-operation of all the media of information. They could participate in the celebration year of human rights by a frank discussion not only of achievements but also of the failures in implementing the principles of the Declaration of Human Rights. To achieve such

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co-operation, the United Nations and its agencies should make a special effort to facilitate the task of the media of information by supplying them with interesting, human, and attractive press and radio material.

"6. To implement point 5, it is suggested that regional conferences with opinion-makers in all media of information (press, radio and television) in all key countries be convoked by local U.N. officers. Modern media should not be forgotten. Telstar, for instance, should carry a message from the Secretary-General and of some heads of state on human rights. Perhaps one of the scientific space capsules could be launched on the day of December 10, 1963, named accordingly. Such modern media could tremendously help to enhance the problem of human rights.

"As a non-governmental organization the International Federation of Free Journalists will be more than willing to cooperate in the anniversary, according to our abilities, both in the U.S. and in Europe."

WORLD JEWISH CONGRESS

"... (1) My organization ventures to urge that the opportunity of the fifteenth anniversary of the adoption by the General Assembly of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights should be taken to conduct a sustained effort of public information and education, in addition to the holding of any ceremonial observance. For this purpose it seems to us that a minimum period of a week would be necessary; and we would hope that the observance of such a week would become an annual event in the life of the international community.

"(2) We suggest that the week might fitly be opened by a special session of the General Assembly, and that this should be accompanied or followed by proclamations by the heads of State or government in every Member State; and this could be followed by appropriate statements in national legislative bodies by the leaders of all parties represented. Wherever appropriate, and in accordance with the constitutional procedures in the various countries, similar proclamations and statements could be made in the governing bodies of states, provinces and municipalities.

"(3) All schools throughout the world should be invited by the appropriate national or State authorities to set aside periods during the week for the reading and explanation of the Universal Declaration.

"(4) In view of the fact that incitement to racial hostility continues to disturb the public peace in many countries, it is suggested that UNESCO should be invited to prepare a short and simple pamphlet which would summarize the results of scientific investigation on the question of race. While there exists an abundant literature on the subject of high quality, misconceptions and superstitions on questions of race are wide-spread among people who either cannot or will not devote time and thought to the study of technical works or expositions. It is felt that a short and simple statement, supported by the authority of the great majority of scientists in this field, would have an important impact if widely distributed. We feel that in addition to the dissemination of such a pamphlet through the UN Department of Public Information, through appropriate government information offices as well as non-governmental organizations, the study of such a leaflet could also form a significant part of the commemoration which we propose should take place in the schools.

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"(5) We venture to suggest the appointment by the Secretary-General of a special committee of non-governmental organizations in consultative status in order to encourage and coordinate the observance of the anniversary by these organizations. While every non-governmental organization would still be free to organize its own commemoration in ways which would meet the special needs and composition of its own constituency, it is suggested that acting together wherever possible and desirable they could make a more effective impact on international public opinion. They could, for example, arrange for a common proclamation or appeal signed by outstanding leaders in every walk of life. They could in many countries hold in common public manifestations of support of the Universal Declaration, and their combined membership could ensure, if properly organized, large attendances. They could offer prizes to school children or undergraduates for essays on one or other aspect of the Universal Declaration. They could mobilize public opinion in many impressive ways, but this seems to us to be clearly a task the responsibility for which must fall on non-official bodies, which is why we feel it may be necessary to establish a special non-governmental committee for the purpose.

"(6) Hundreds of millions of people throughout the world are organized in religious bodies, international as well as national and local, and all of them have a direct interest, even though their interpretation and approach may not be the same, in the general doctrine which is embodied in the Universal Declaration. If their active interest could be engaged, they could make a massive contribution to the education of public opinion generally as well as of their own constituencies. It cannot be denied that any direct approach to these bodies by the United Nations would raise difficulties of various kinds, and we therefore suggest that this task should be confided to the proposed committee of non-governmental organizations We attach great importance to this proposal not only because religious bodies exercise great influence, but because religious intolerance is one of the evils which must be overcome in order to secure effective implementation of the Universal Declaration. The participation of religious bodies in the commemoration could take the form of special services or prayers or sermons, and on such occasions the celebrant or preacher might usefully belong to a race other than that of the majority of the congregation.

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"While the co-operation of religious bodies in common acts of worship would in many cases present special difficulties and therefore be ruled out on theological grounds, there seems to us to be no reason why the leadership of all the great religions could not be persuaded to sign a common declaration of support of the Universal Declaration and include an appeal to their adherents everywhere to promote its acceptance and implementation.

"We take the liberty of making these proposals because we are deeply convinced that the fifteenth anniversary represents both a challenge and an opportunity. Merely ritual acts of commemoration, however impressive, would not reach the masses of ordinary people upon whose support in the long run the fulfilment of the promise implicit in the Universal Declaration must depend."

WORLD FEDERATION OF CATHOLIC YOUNG WOMEN AND GIRLS

"... I am pleased to submit on behalf of my organization suggestions concerning the observance of the fifteenth anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and for materials which might be useful to our national and local affiliates. These suggestions are as follows:

"1. Appropriate ceremonies at United Nations Headquarters, and those of specialized agencies, including prayer service, speeches emphasizing the progress made over the last fifteen years in promulgation and implementation of the Universal Declaration throughout the world.

"2. Participation at the national level of various member states in similar programs with emphasis on:

(a) Proclamation of the day.

(b) Suitable ceremonies.

(c) Development of plans for further implementation of human rights, which might include seminars, study programs and setting up of National Advisory Committees where such do not already exist.

"3. Participation by non-governmental organizations at international, national and local levels through publicity, articles in periodicals and suitable observances at local, regional, national and international meetings.

"As to information materials which might be suitable for use on a national and a local level, that which comes most urgently to mind would be some type of popular summarization of the work which has been done in the field of human rights over the last fifteen years. This would include a brief history of the adoption of the Declaration, the present status of the draft covenants, the influence of the Universal Declaration, particularly on the newly independent countries, and the actual progress made in various parts of the world in implementation of the principles of the Universal Declaration. Additionally, some dramatic picture materials focusing attention on specific human rights would be most useful."